

SLEEP

Sometimes the smell of sleep
clings tight as smoke
after the fire of lipstick.

Humid sheets become plaster
sticking with inexact romance
somewhere between memory and myth.

Sleep is a twisted configuration
prolonged beyond the last act,
a charade without actors.

The remains of everyone's sleep
are divided among dreaming strangers
who can neither read nor write.

WATCHING TULIPS BREATHE

You focus on the green
and soon it pulsates, flickers,
taking a quick, short breath
that races with a quiver
up to caress the yellow bloom,

until, after a beat of time,
petals begin to stretch
and slowly inch open
like a baby's awakening yawn.

But all this is a secret
requiring patience and a hush.

NO FOOTPRINTS

The sky has no footprints
and clouds chase away romance

but flesh touches other flesh
leaving some invisible residue

diminishing like anemic roses
as the earth adventures

for we are not human evergreens
the sun drinks up our moisture

and we become a hidden freckle
on someone's lost memory

without clarity or words
only a breeze on a cello string.

— Leslie Woolf Hedley

Cotati CA

THE CHESTER BRIDGE

-- sometimes i take a great notion
to jump in the river & drown/ leadbelly

was more john berryman
than it's a wonderful life
with chipped gray girders
that shook like hell
when a semi rolled by.
whether watching papers
dance erratically
to the surface
or crab apples belly flop
into the cold river
it was a liberating feeling
that i never grew tired of.

MUSICIAN

all those hours
of practice
frustrating chord changes,
developing calluses,
breaking strings
finally paid off
when i sang
my way into
her pants

BLACK COAT BIRDMAN

of the washington bar & grill
with the rust ridden voice
swears up & down
that he's not a regular,
only slipped in
for a quick drink.
he's smooth as satin
& methedrine
the way he tosses out
those twenty-five dollar words
like they were nickels
that had sprouted wings.
he can buffalo his way out
of the tightest spots
& this woman thinks
she has him backed
into a corner.

FAMILY MAN

these days he does
all his wandering
in his head
but he has
old road maps
& a charlie parker
cassette under
the front seat
of the buick
in case
of emergency